

Welcome to Our Schools Curriculum

The CCSD ELL Division is grateful for the generosity of The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for providing us the rights to share their *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum with our teachers. This curriculum was developed for New York Teachers of Refugee students. With this in mind, there are a few lessons that we will be offering adaptation suggestions to address the needs of Newcomer students living in Clark County.

When deciding what modules to teach, keep in mind who your students are and what they need to learn about being in a U.S. school. As they state in their materials, “Instructors should review the Modules and select the materials that would be most relevant to the refugee students (CCSD Newcomers) enrolled in their school system, and most useful when designing lesson plans and classroom activities.” Also, you may have English-speaking students who do not qualify as ELLs who could benefit from the acculturation pieces of this curriculum. A student coming from England speaks a different English and can experience culture shock as they begin living in the U.S. Please use these materials, as they seem appropriate for these students as well.

Please review pages 4-8, Background for Instructors. As you read any of these materials, remember that the authors are in New York, and programs mentioned do not align to CCSD programs. Reading considerations are also attached for you to review before reading each module. We are providing these materials as a starting point for you to be able to develop lessons to meet the acculturation needs of your Newcomer students. Thank you for looking at these materials. The CCSD ELL Division welcomes your feedback on this curriculum as we are offering it to our schools for the first time this year. If you have any questions or need additional supports for your Newcomer students please reach out to our Division at (702) 799-2137. Also, please look at the materials and links specifically provided to address newcomer needs found on our website at ell.ccsd.net. Most schools have an ELL Student Success Advocate. These staff members receive additional training from the ELL Division and can also act as a resource for you.

CCSD CONSIDERATIONS

Module 13: Keeping Families Informed

In this reading...

When it says ...	Think...
refugee	newcomer
Refugee Academy	school site
academic coach	mentor

- Grades 6-12 lessons on sexual health: refer to CCSD Policy 6123, CCSD curriculum materials and health standards here: <http://www.ccsd.net/students/sex-ed-infor.php>.
- School nurse lesson K-12 can be discarded or modified based on needs.
- Have school communication forms readily available (Title 1 forms, field trips, classroom behavior slips, etc.).
- Videos are not available at this time.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOLS



BUREAU OF REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE
OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

**REVISED 2011
ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR**

The Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) *Welcome to our Schools*, which includes Refugee Academy and Mini-Academy Curricula, Parent and Professional Development Programs, a Guide to Academic Coaches, a Guide to the Videos, and the videos *Refugee Student Interviews*, *Refugee Parent Interviews*, *A Day in Elementary School*, *A Day in Middle School* and *A Day in High School*, was developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (OTDA/BRIA).

Funding for RSIG *Welcome to Our Schools* came from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's Refugee School Impact Grant Program, funding opportunity number HHS-2010-ACF-ORR-ZE-0083.

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance encourages educators to reproduce any document created by the agency for the purpose of professional development or instruction. The constituent RSIG, videos and documents and all rights therein, including copyright, are the sole and exclusive property of OTDA/BRIA and are protected by United States copyright laws (17 U.S.C. 101 et seq). Permission is granted in advance for the reproduction of copyrighted materials for educational and noncommercial use only. Any such use or adaptation of material from RSIG *Welcome to Our Schools* must acknowledge OTDA/BRIA's copyright in the following form:

This document has been funded by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance with Federal Refugee School Impact Grant # HHS-2010-ACF-ORR-ZE-0083, Office of Refugee Resettlement. Copyright 2006 and 2011, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, Albany, New York, reprinted by permission.



MODULE 13
KEEPING FAMILIES
INFORMED

MODULE 13: Keeping Families Informed

PURPOSE

The purpose of Module 13 is to inform students about the importance of school-home communication.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify ways to keep families informed of school events
- Understand the purpose of keeping families informed about academic progress
- Understand methods of keeping the school informed about events at home and personal concerns that affect success at school
- Understand the role of the school nurse-teacher



SUPPLIES

***Handout 13 – 1:
School-Home
Communication***

***Handout 13 – 2:
School Events***

**School Nurse-
Teacher supply box:**
lunch card, mittens,
gloves (optional: one pair
of gloves per student);
medicines stored in
nurse's office (aspirin,
asthma medicine, etc);
thermometer, tongue
depressor, Band-Aid,
jacket, hat, boots,
crutches, soap, towel)

**Sample
announcements**

Announcements to be
delivered over the public
address system

Videos:
***Refugee Student
Interviews,
Refugee Parent
Interviews, and
A Day in School***
(Elementary, Middle or
High School)



MODULE 13: Keeping Families Informed

VOCABULARY

Elementary Vocabulary

Lunch Card
Free Lunch
Permission
Announcements
School Nurse
Boots
Soap
Washcloth
Jacket
Hat
Gloves

Secondary Vocabulary

Lunch Card
Free Lunch
Permission
PA System
Announcements
Newspaper
Communication
Heat
Housing
School Nurse
Thermometer
Band-Aid
Crutches
Soap
Washcloth
Jacket
Hat
Gloves
Boots



Key Points – Keeping Families Informed



- 1. Schools inform students about school events in many ways; it is also the responsibility of students to inform families.**

Prior to discussing school-home communication with the students in the Refugee Academy, the instructors should determine what methods the schools use to inform parents about school policies and events. Methods may include:

- Flyers and notices for students to take home (or to be mailed home)
- Newsletters, either mailed to homes or posted on a school district Website
- Field trip announcements and permission slips
- Letters from the principal or school district
- School newspapers and local newspapers
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Open House and other evening programs for parents
- Education Week, which may include tours and classroom visits
- Academic Coach meetings and phone calls
- Public address system announcements for students
- Homeroom teacher announcements



Inform students that school administrators and teachers keep information flowing to parents, but the students have to participate in the process. They should bring notices home, write down events in their school calendars, and keep parents informed about upcoming school events.

It is well known that most school notices end up in the bottom of a backpack or locker, or on the floor of the school bus. Since schools have annual calendars, explain to students that they should review the calendar with their parents and highlight events that parents may want to attend.



2. *Monitoring academic progress is the responsibility of the school, family, and student.*



Students should also keep their parents informed about their academic progress, but if they do not, there are phone calls from teachers, interim reports, graded papers, parent-teacher conferences, and report cards that all indicate how the students are doing in school.

Instructors should describe these methods of communication to the students, explaining that parents will be informed that they can call teachers anytime for an update on student progress. Parents will also be given information about the dates of report cards. Interim reports, usually sent halfway through a marking period or after a midterm exam, are typically sent in the mail to parents.

Suggest to students that if they are concerned about their progress or grades, they should talk to the teacher to try to figure out how to improve the situation.

Even if the teacher still feels that the parents should be involved, the students will have demonstrated interest in getting help from the teacher. Remind students that teachers appreciate effort, not just achievement.



3. *Communication between schools and families can be limited due to language barriers; resources are available.*

The students are going to be the key to communication when family members do not speak English. Inform the students that they will be responsible for explaining school-related information to their parents. If they need assistance, they can consult with their Academic Coach, English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor, translator, guidance counselor, or classroom teachers.



It is a big responsibility for students to try to adjust to their new school, learn a new language, make new friends, and also keep their families informed. Family members may be overwhelmed and distracted with adapting to their new lives and looking out for the welfare of the family.

It is especially difficult if the students themselves are bewildered about school. They may be embarrassed by their parents, or feel pressure from their parents to either adapt to their new life, or resist changing cultural traditions. The students, often at a young age, are being pulled in many different directions.



4. *Students who are worried about issues at home can confide in school personnel so that their academic progress is not jeopardized.*

For many students, as they become more fluent in English and more comfortable in the school, it is frustrating to keep parents informed. As students move into middle and high schools, they tend to want to keep their private business to themselves.

Encourage students to share information about their life at school so that parents will know how they are doing and can support them. If students are struggling and having difficulties (academically or personally) they should talk to a trusted adult, who will determine if the parents need to get involved. In addition to the Academic Coach or teacher, the students may want to talk to a guidance counselor, peer who will get advice from an adult, community agency staff in the neighborhood, religious leader, or the school nurse. The school social worker can help students with problems at home, including issues related to food and heat, transportation, clothing, housing, baby supplies, and safety concerns.



Refugee students will not only have to be told many times that help is available. They may not realize that there are state and local agencies that can make sure they have enough food, and can ensure that they will have heat in the winter and milk for younger siblings. Most of the students in the Academy are accustomed to doing without even the basics. To them, speaking up about such luxuries as housing and clothing does not occur to them. Provide the students with flyers, phone numbers, and brochures (usually provided by state agencies in many languages) that describe programs related to food stamps, public assistance, homeowner loans, and so forth.

The students may experience attitudes on the part of their new neighbors and classmates that are not welcoming to refugees in America. They may be told that they should not accept a “handout” and should make it on their own.

They may also be told that they can go “from rags to riches” and follow the “American dream” in their new country. This may be true, but for most refugee students and their families, there will be daily struggles to adjust and be successful in getting food on the table. The students may want to work hard in school, but they will be trying to cope with some of the frustrations that are occurring at home. They may see their parents encountering discrimination and hardships that they did not expect.

Inform the students in the Refugee Academy that there are many adults (and peers) in the school who will listen to them and help them. If they are aware of available services and understand that they are expected to take advantage of them so that they can be successful in their new country, they will feel more comfortable approaching adults in the school for help.

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: KNOW YOUR SCHOOL NURSE-TEACHER

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)

In this activity:

The school nurse-teacher should be invited to the Refugee Academy to discuss assistance that can be provided by the nurse's office.



- Prepare a box that contains items that represent how the school nurse can help students.
- One by one, take items out of a box to demonstrate types of assistance. Stress confidentiality and privacy.
 - Show a lunch card and describe how to enroll in the free lunch program.
 - Show clothing, (including hats, gloves, and mittens) that has been donated to refugee students.
 - Show medicines and explain school requirements about storing medicines in the nurse's office.
 - Show a phone and tell how the nurse will use it to call parents if a child is sick; the food pantry if a family needs food; and local agencies if a family needs housing, transportation or other services. Show how the nurse will call 911 in emergencies.
 - Show a thermometer, tongue depressor, and stethoscope, used for sick visits and physical.
 - Show a Band-Aid and put one on each student to demonstrate how the nurse will assist with cuts and other minor health problems in school.
 - Show crutches and a sling.
 - Show soap, a washcloth, and toothpaste to indicate that the nurse will help with hygiene.



Discuss:

- How to get to the nurse if student is supposed to be in class
- How the nurse will provide counseling about health concerns
- Personal privacy during examinations
- Respect for cultural traditions
- How to explain problems to the nurse
 - Translator
 - Use of body language and gestures
 - Drawing pictures
 - Bilingual peers
- When the nurse's office will call families
- Frequent visits to the nurse
 - Possible health reasons
 - Stress
 - Getting out of class



Grades 6-12 also discuss:

- Confidentiality rules about health concerns (NYS HIPAA law)
- Sex education resources (health class, nurse)
- Confidentiality rules about sexually transmitted diseases and other related health concerns (pregnancy, menstrual cycle, HIV-AIDS, etc.)
- Personal health and possible causes of health problems
 - Current and past diets, including malnutrition
 - Stress
 - Lack of health care

- Need for immunizations
- Disabilities, either diagnosed or undetected

For all topics of discussion, point out that the school nurse will be busy, but will find the time to talk to students if they indicate that they would like to talk to someone. Explain to students how to approach the nurse (or nurse's aide) and how to bring up sensitive subjects.

ACTIVITY #2: SCHOOL- HOME COMMUNICATION

Grades K-5 (30 minutes)

In this activity:

Students will discuss the many different ways that schools will communicate with parents.

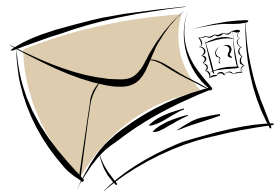
Instructors should discuss how parents will be informed by the school about events and student progress, but that the students are also responsible for informing their families about school-related activities.



Distribute *Handout 13-1: School-Home Communication* and *Handout 13-2: School Events* and discuss the many different ways that schools will communicate with parents. (The students may want to color the handouts.)

▪ The pictures depict:

- The nurse calls home when a child is sick.
- Parents can call the school anytime.
- Teachers call home to talk to parents.
- Schools send home information with the students.
- Schools mail information to homes.
- Announcements are made every morning in school.
- Parents can check schoolwork and report cards.
- Parents can help with homework.
- Teachers may send e-mail.



- Discuss the types of events families will want to know about. (Go over each item on *Handout 13-2: School Events*)

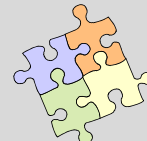
- School play
- Science fair
- PTA/PTO meetings
- Sports
- Music concerts
- Awards
- Graduation
- Book fairs/art shows
- Parent-teacher conferences



Ask students to take *Handouts 13-1* and *13-2* home to their families to discuss. This is their homework. Explain that students will have to keep families informed if they are non-English-speaking, and that parents can attend school events if they do not speak English.



Discussion Questions



Who will you share the handout with at home?

Who will you tell about school events?

How will family members get to the school for events and conferences?

Can students come to school events with family members?

What after-school events can family members attend?

Do your parents need to understand English to attend school events?

Grades 6-12 also discuss:

What if your family members do not act the way you would like them to act when they visit your school?

What if you are concerned that your parents will not approve of your progress in school?

Who can you talk to if your parents cannot provide support to you as you adjust to school?

Follow up by asking students if they shared the handouts with families, checking off the homework assignment.

ACTIVITY #3: VIDEO

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)



Show the video ***A Day in School*** (Elementary, Middle or High School).

Use the ***Guide to the Videos (Binder Two)*** for introducing the video and for follow-up discussion.

ACTIVITY #4: SCHOOL FOR SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (30 minutes)

In this activity:

Students will discuss their siblings who are in other schools.

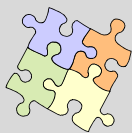


Assess the number of students who have siblings and/or friends in different schools. Explain that the rules and behavioral expectations are the same in all schools.

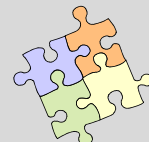


Show the video ***A Day in School*** (Elementary, Middle or High School) for different grade levels. For example, if it is a high school Refugee Academy, show the middle school or elementary video, depending upon which video would be of more interest to the students.

The video ***Refugee Student Interviews*** can show students how families are involved in the education of their children. Older students can also watch the video ***Refugee Parent Interviews***.



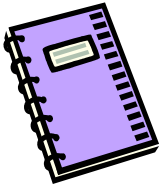
Discussion Questions



What is similar about all of the schools? What is different?

What do families need to know about a day in school?

What will you do to be helpful to friends and siblings in other schools?



JOURNAL TOPIC

Grades K-5

Draw a picture of a school event that you want to participate in during the school year.

Grades 6-8

Draw or write about school events that you would like to participate in during the school year. How will you involve your family?

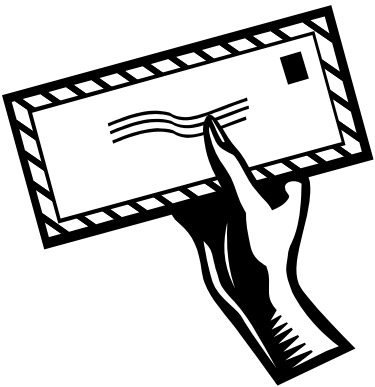
Grades 9-12

Draw or write about your responsibilities in providing help to your siblings and other family members. Discuss how you plan to build the confidence and self-reliance of family members.



SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Arrange with students a school event for parents.
- Students prepare displays for parents to see during Open House.
- Review *Handout 1-1: Please Visit Our School* from Module 1 to invite parents to school, or prepare a flyer about an evening parent meeting, to take home to parents.
- Distribute sample report cards and discuss how they will be reviewed by teachers when they meet with parents.
- Invite the school social worker or guidance counselor to talk about services that are available to families.
- Invite peers in the school to discuss how they have handled problems with academics and where they received assistance.
- Visit schools that siblings will attend.



Handout 13-1: School-Home Communication

